

V.—Obituary.

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

THE death of Dr. Wallace, which took place on November the 7th, in his 91st year, severs the last remaining link of the chain of great names of the mid-Victorian era associated with the introduction and confirmation of the doctrine of Evolution by Natural Selection.

First conceived by Charles Darwin as far back as 1842, and communicated only to Sir Charles Lyell and Sir Joseph Hooker, his most intimate friends, it was not till 1858 that he received from Wallace, who was then in the Moluccas, an essay for publication, "On the Tendency of Varieties to depart indefinitely from the Original Type," which almost exactly reproduced Darwin's own views.

Wallace's essay, together with a sketch of Darwin's own ideas, were communicated jointly to the Linnean Society on July the 1st, 1858, and his views were further elaborated in his 'Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection' (London, 1875) and in 'Darwinism; an Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection, with some of its Applications' (London, 1889). It was in these two volumes that Wallace contributed to the progress and understanding of the Darwinian doctrines. But he did not quite see eye to eye with Darwin in every respect. He was of opinion that Natural Selection alone could not account for the development of the human race, and adopted views of a teleological character which he elaborated in a later volume, the 'World of Life,' published in 1910, in which he argued that the complexity of the structure of living beings necessarily implied a creative power, a directive mind, and an ultimate purpose, and that man was the one crowning product of the whole cosmic process of development.

Wallace was born at Usk in Monmouthshire, on January 8, 1823, and was educated at Hertford Grammar School. During his early years he first earned his living as a land surveyor and an architect in company with an elder brother, and

afterwards as a teacher in a school at Leicester. During these early days he showed a marked taste for natural history, and especially for botany. About 1844 he became acquainted with H. W. Bates, and they formed a plan to make an expedition together to South America, in order to form natural history collections, by the sale of portions of which they hoped to recoup themselves for the expenses of the journey.

Finally they embarked from Liverpool, in 1848, for the Amazon. After working for a year or so together they separated, Wallace exploring the Rio Negro, one of the principal tributaries of the Amazon, while Bates devoted himself to the main river. Wallace returned in 1852, but was unfortunate enough to lose the greater portion of his collections and notes owing to the ship in which he was returning taking fire. In the following year he published an account of his journey, 'Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro,' as well as a volume on 'The Palm Trees of the Amazon.'

In 1854, having disposed of such specimens as he had saved, he started off for the Malay Archipelago, where he remained for eight years, collecting and exploring, and visiting most of the islands from Sumatra to New Guinea. The collections he brought back numbered over 125,000 specimens, including some 8000 bird-skins, most of which are now in the British Museum. It was during this period, while living at Ternate in the Moluccas, and while he lay suffering from a sharp attack of intermittent fever, that the idea of Natural Selection occurred to him, and three days later he had written out an outline of his theory and posted it to Darwin.

Among other results of his investigations in the east was his discovery of a distinct break in the faunal continuity between Asia and Australia in the narrow strait dividing the two small islands of Bali and Lombok, the former being Asiatic in its affinities, the latter Australian. This line has since come to be known as Wallace's line, and his first

communication to 'The Ibis' was a letter on the "Geographical Distribution of Birds," dated Batchian, March 1859, containing criticisms and suggestions in regard to the Zoo-geographical Regions as proposed by Dr. P. L. Sclater in a paper published in the Linnean Society's Journal of the previous year. These studies finally culminated in his classical book 'The Geographical Distribution of Animals' (1876), and that fascinating volume of essays, 'Island Life' (1880). The general account of his wanderings in the east was contained in two volumes on 'The Malay Archipelago,' not published till 1869, but since often reprinted—which forms with Bates' 'River Amazon' and Darwin's 'Journal of Researches' the three most entrancing works of natural-history travels ever written.

After his return from the Dutch Indies Wallace settled down in England, and spent the rest of his long life writing mostly on problems of natural history, but also on those of economics, politics, and psychology, on all of which subjects he held advanced and original views.

He was elected an Extraordinary Member of the B. O. U. in 1860, while still in the east, and between 1859 and 1874 wrote a good many papers in 'The Ibis,' chiefly about the birds he had met with and collected in the Malay Archipelago. A list of these is added to this memoir. He also communicated a series of papers on his ornithological collections to the Zoological Society.

Many honours and distinctions were conferred on Wallace. He was awarded a Royal Medal of the Royal Society in 1868, and in 1890 very appropriately the Darwin Medal, but it was not till 1893 that he was elected a Fellow of the Society. He received honorary degrees of LL.D. from Dublin in 1882, and of D.C.L. from Oxford in 1889, and was chosen a member of the Order of Merit in 1908. In 1881 he was granted a Civil List pension of £200 a year. In addition to many other books on political and social problems he published an autobiography, 'My Life,' in 1905, reissuing it in a condensed form in 1908.

During the latter part of his life he lived at Broadstone, a village in Dorset, about seven miles from Bournemouth, and it was there that he died after a short illness lasting only a few days.

Wallace was perhaps the last distinguished representative of an old type—the naturalist, traveller, biologist, geographer, and knower of species, with a mind always seeking to discover the causes of things, but with no taste for the modern methods of morphology, or for the newer forms of chemical, physical, and mathematical analyses now so much in vogue in zoological research. A man of great human sympathies, always ready to champion the cause of the oppressed and to make the world a better place to live in, he was himself of a gentle and reflective nature and had no ambition to shine forth among his fellow men.

List of Wallace's Contributions to 'The Ibis.'

- (1) Letter from Mr. Wallace concerning the Geographical Distribution of Birds. *Ibis*, 1859, pp. 449-454.
- (2) The Ornithology of North Celebes. *Ibis*, 1860, pp. 140-147.
- (3) On the Ornithology of Ceram and Waigiou. *Ibis*, 1861, pp. 283-291, pl. ix.
- (4) Notes on the Ornithology of Timor. *Ibis*, 1861, pp. 347-351.
- (5) On some new Birds from the Northern Moluccas. *Ibis*, 1862, pp. 348-357.
- (6) Notes on *Corvus senex* Garn. & Less., and on *Corvus fuscicapillus* G. R. Gray. *Ibis*, 1863, pp. 100-102.
- (7) Notes on the Fruit-Pigeons of the Genus *Treeron*. *Ibis*, 1863, pp. 318-320.
- (8) Remarks on the Value of Osteological Characters in the Classification of Birds. *Ibis*, 1864, pp. 36-41.
- (9) Remarks on the Habits, Distribution, and Affinities of the Genus *Pitta*. *Ibis*, 1864, pp. 100-114.
- (10) Note on *Astur griseiceps* Schlegel. *Ibis*, 1864, p. 184, pl. v.
- (11) On the Pigeons of the Malay Archipelago. *Ibis*, 1865, pp. 365-400, pl. ix.
- (12) On the Raptorial Birds of the Malay Archipelago. *Ibis*, 1868, pp. 1-27, 215-216, pl. i.
- (13) On the Arrangement of the Families constituting the Order Passeres. *Ibis*, 1874, pp. 406-416.

RICHARD JOHN USSHER.

WE regret to have to record the death, which took place in a private hospital in Dublin on the 12th of November of last year, of Mr. Ussher, of Cappagh, Co. Waterford, well known to most of us as our chief authority on Irish Birds, and a member of our Union.

Born in 1841, Mr. Ussher was brought up as a country gentleman, and was a leading member of a family which had been connected with County Waterford for a long period. His great-grandfather, Capt. Arthur Ussher, served in Marlborough's army, and his father, Mr. Richard Ussher, was a well-known magistrate, who, in the early part of the nineteenth century, showed great energy and capacity in dealing with the disorders of the times in his district, and received the thanks of government for his services.

Though best known as an ornithologist, Ussher was interested in other fields of knowledge. He was a keen student of archæology, and was also given to the exploration of caves, especially that of Castle Pook near Doneraile, where he discovered the remains of the hyæna and other extinct animals, by which he added largely to our knowledge of the early forms of life in Ireland.

He became a member of the Union in 1894, and in 1900, in conjunction with Robert Warren, he published a work on 'The Birds of Ireland' (reviewed in 'Ibis,' 1901, p. 147), the first general account of Irish birds published since 1851, when Thompson's 'Natural History of Ireland' appeared, and which has since remained the standard work on the subject. In 1908 he brought the Irish records up to date in a little brochure, 'A list of Irish Birds,' published as a Guide-book to the bird-collections in the Museum of Science and Art, Dublin.

All Ussher's shorter papers on birds relate to those of Ireland, and are to be found in the pages of the 'Irish Naturalist' or of 'British Birds.' Though at one time an extensive collector of birds' eggs, he became later on

a great upholder of the strict preservation of the Irish avifauna.

His death is a great loss to Irish ornithology, and will be deplored by all who have had the pleasure of his personal acquaintance.

WILLIAM JOHN ANSORGE.

THOUGH not a member of our Union, we cannot allow the death of Dr. Ansonge, which took place at Loanda, in Angola, on October 31 last, to pass without a short notice.

Dr. Ansonge was born in Bengal in 1850, and was the son of the late Rev. G. P. Ansonge, of the Church Missionary Society. After being educated at Mauritius and at Pembroke College, Cambridge, he became a Professor at the Royal College, Mauritius, a position which he held till 1886. He then came to England to study medicine, and after obtaining his qualification was appointed a District Medical Officer in Uganda in 1892. While there he made large collections of birds and other animals, and an account of the former, which are now in the Tring Museum, appeared as an appendix, prepared by Dr. Hartert, to his well-known work 'Under the African Sun,' published in 1899, where a vivid account of his experiences and his zoological discoveries in British East Africa and Uganda was embodied. In 1899 he crossed the continent of Africa from east to west, and later on was district medical officer in Nigeria; in this capacity he took part in the Aro expedition, receiving a medal and clasp. He retired from the service shortly after this, but he could not give up travelling and collecting, and he spent most of his remaining years wandering in different parts of Africa.

The British Museum contains a large collection of Angola birds made by him in 1905 and 1908-9, and also a collection made in Portuguese Guinea on his way home in 1909, and many new species and subspecies bear his name. He also collected largely in other groups, especially in mammals and freshwater fishes.

ORA WILLIS KNIGHT.

THE death is announced, in his fortieth year, of Dr. Ora Willis Knight, well known as an authority on the birds of Maine, on which he published the standard book ('The Birds of Maine,' Bangor, Me., 1908), besides contributing many notes on the same subject to the 'Auk.' Dr. Knight was a chemist by profession, and had been consulting chemist and assayer to the State of Maine since 1903.

ANTON FRITSCH.

FROM 'Nature' we learn of the death of Dr. Anton Fritsch of Prague, on November 15, aged eighty-one. He was director of the natural history departments of the Royal Bohemian University and for many years professor of zoology in the same institution. Dr. Fritsch's first published work (1851) was a list of the Bohemian, German, and Latin names of the birds found in Bohemia; and throughout his life he took the deepest interest in the local fauna of his native country. He will perhaps be best remembered for his numerous researches in palæontology, especially in the Permian Amphibia of the "Gaskohle" formation.

*VI. Notices of recent Ornithological Publications.**Bangs on some Siberian Birds.*

[Some Birds from the Highlands of Siberia. By Outram Bangs. Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool. Harvard Coll. liv. 1913, pp. 463-474.]

The expedition during which the collection here described was obtained, took place under the leadership of Dr. Theodore Lyman, of Harvard. He was accompanied by Mr. Hollister and Mr. Klein, the latter a hunter and trapper of great experience, and considering that only five weeks were spent on the collecting-grounds, the results—287 birdskins and almost the same number of mammals—were astonishing.

The localities visited were the Tchegan-Burgazi Pass,